

Bay Area is shipping out its DDT dirt

Too toxic for California and rejected by Colorado, waste will go to Arizona

PHOENIX (AP) — Some 80,000 tons of dirt being dredged from a harbor in San Francisco Bay because it contains the banned pesticide DDT will be buried in Arizona after being rejected by Colorado residents.

The soil comes from Richmond Harbor, where a now-obsolete pesticide packaging plant once dumped DDT, or dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, and other hazardous chemicals into the water. The dirt is being removed as part of a \$10 million federal Superfund cleanup project.

The soil must be dumped outside of California because it contains about 30 parts per million of DDT, well above the 1 ppm allowed by state law, John Lyons, a lawyer for the Environmental Protection Agency's regional office in San Francisco, said recently.

The federal agency banned DDT in the 1970s but has set no toxicity standards for the chemi-

cal. DDT has been blamed for decimating bird populations through eggshell thinning, and could be fatal to humans if consumed in sufficient quantities.

"It's a historical quirk," Lyons said. "The federal hazardous waste system was established in the 1980s, and by then, you couldn't use DDT. They were looking at the current industrial operations at the time."

The DDT-laced soil will be hauled by rail and then by truck to its final resting place at Butterfield Station landfill near Mobile, about 30 miles south of Phoenix.

Waste Management Inc., a national waste-disposal company under federal contract, had planned to deposit the soil at a landfill near Colorado Springs. A public outcry there forced the company to turn to its Arizona site.

The EPA approved the Arizona and Colorado landfills in May as disposal sites for the DDT-contaminated soil.

Both states follow federal haz-

ardous waste guidelines, but California adopted more stringent standards because of special conditions outlined by the EPA, according to Lyons.

The soil will be sent by train to Arizona over the next two months, with the first shipment expected to arrive next week, Cassano said.

The soil will be mixed with the day's regular garbage, which is then covered with about 6 inches of fresh dirt.

The Butterfield Station landfill has synthetic liners and collection systems to catch any leaking liquids, Cassano said.

DDT could contaminate the environment if it is not properly covered and is carried as dust, Lyons said.

DDT is stored in increasing amounts in animal tissues as it makes its way up the food chain. The chemical posed a danger in San Francisco Bay because mussels and other tainted marine life are eaten by birds and fish, which in turn are eaten by humans and other mammals.



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Bradley Angel of Greenpeace, center, talks to the media Tuesday in front of the Arizona state Capitol in Phoenix during a demonstration against DDT-laced soil that is to be shipped from Richmond.